

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

# **PRESCRIBED GRAZING (ACRES)**

## **CODE 528A**

### **DEFINITION**

Managing the controlled harvest of vegetation with grazing or animals.

### **PURPOSE**

This practice may be applied as part of a conservation management system to accomplish one or more of the following purposes:

- Improve or maintain the health and vigor of plant communities.
- Improve or maintain quantity and quality of forage for livestock health and productivity.
- Improve or maintain water quality and quantity.
- Reduce accelerated soil erosion, and maintain or improve soil condition.
- Promote economic stability through grazing land sustainability.
- Improve or maintain the quantity and quality of food and/or cover available for wildlife.

### **CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

Prescribed Grazing may be applied on all lands where grazing and/or browsing animals are managed. This practice is suggested as a remedy for identifiable water quality concerns attributable to grazing.

Prescribed Grazing will be applied based on the premise that grazing/browsing is an integral part of grazing land ecosystem processes.

### **CRITERIA**

#### **General Criteria Applicable For All the Purposes Stated Above**

Prescribed grazing must be applied in conjunction with facilitating practices, such as Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), Section IV—Practice Standards and Specifications, 382—Fence, 574—Spring Development, 378—Pond, 614—Watering Facility, etc., to assure resource sustainability on grazing lands.

A successful grazing strategy addresses the following criteria:

Removal of herbage shall be in accordance with production limitations, rate of plant growth, and management goals using Sections II and III of the FOTG and other references as guidance.

Duration and intensity of grazing shall be managed based on desired plant community structure and expected productivity of key forage species to meet management unit objectives.

Frequency of grazing, and extent of defoliations shall be managed to promote desirable plants and plant communities, based on the rate and physiological conditions of plant growth. A grazing strategy shall be implemented to manage animal density, grazing distribution, length of grazing periods, and season of use to provide for sufficient growing season rest for plants following grazing.

Initiation and termination of grazing shall be timed to enhance desired plant and plant community health and vigor and/or to inhibit undesirable plants.

Manipulate the intensity, frequency, duration, and season of grazing to:

- \* Maintain or restore riparian and upland vegetation,

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Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

**NOTE:** This type of font (**AaBbCcDdEe 123..**) indicates NRCS National Standards.  
This type of font (**AaBbCcDdEe 123..**) indicates Montana Supplement.

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- \* **Maintain enough vegetative cover to prevent accelerated soil erosion by wind and water,**
- \* **Protect stream banks from erosion caused by management,**
- \* **Minimize the delivery of fecal material to water bodies,**
- \* **Promote ecologically stable and economically viable plant communities on both upland and bottom land sites which meet landowner objectives, and**
- \* **Promote resource conditions which allow for an effective water cycle.**

### **Additional Criteria to Improve or Maintain Quantity and Quality of Forage for Livestock Health and Productivity.**

Animals shall be managed in a manner to improve and/or maintain animal health and performance. Plan grazing to match forage quantity and quality with producer goals.

When providing supplemental feed and minerals, place them at sites that will not adversely impact streambank stability, riparian vegetation, or other sensitive areas. Utilize minerals to distribute livestock away from sensitive areas.

### **Additional Criteria to Improve or Maintain Water Quality.**

Manage grazing to maintain watershed vegetation and streambank vegetative cover. Promote deep-rooted streambank stabilizing vegetation in order to minimize bank shearing, and to maintain overhanging banks. Provide thermal cover for watercourses, based on site potential. Where woody species exist, promote their growth and density to aid in controlling animal access to streambanks, and to provide cover and shading to streams.

Manage grazing to maintain adequate vegetation cover and structure to trap and hold sediments during run-off events to rebuild streambanks, restore/recharge aquifers, and dissipate flood energy.

### **Additional Criteria for Soil Erosion and Condition.**

Maintain adequate ground cover, litter, and canopy to maintain or improve infiltration and soil condition.

Grazing shall be managed to reduce excessive animal trampling and bank shearing, or other detrimental effects.

## **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

Promote operator economic stability through the consideration of management needs and objectives, while maintaining the health and vigor of the grazing lands ecosystem, using a grazing strategy.

Prescribed Grazing should consider the needs and effects of other planned enterprises on the same land, such as wildlife and recreation.

Animal husbandry requirements, which affect the design of the grazing prescription, shall be considered. This includes movement of livestock to reduce or prevent disease and parasites and to limit disruption of dam/offspring pairs.

Locations of animal holding facilities, watering sites, winter feeding areas, and calving/lambing areas should be included in the grazing strategy.

Recognition should be made of wildlife effects on water quality and grazing resources, including the season of use, areas of concentration, and the degree of use of plants and plant communities.

## **PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS**

A Prescribed Grazing strategy shall be prepared for all grazing units. A prescribed grazing strategy will include the following information:

1. Clearly stated goals and objectives.
2. A resource inventory that identifies existing resource conditions, concerns, and ecological site potentials.
3. Location and condition of structural improvements such as fences, water developments, etc., including seasonal availability and quality of watering sites.

4. **Documentation of the expected forage quantity (AUMs/acre) and relative forage quality for each management unit during the grazing season. Note any nutritional surpluses or deficiencies.**
5. **Documentation of the number of domestic livestock by animal kind and class, and the estimated number of grazing/browsing wildlife of concern anticipated within the management unit(s).**
6. **A grazing strategy that identifies periods of grazing, resting, and other treatment activities for each management unit. The entire grazing rotation schedule should be outlined.**
7. **A monitoring plan with appropriate records to assess whether the grazing strategy is meeting the land manager's objectives. Suggested minimum monitoring items are grazing use records outlining grazing periods and numbers of animals in each grazing unit; assessments or photographs of resource conditions, including condition of streambanks; notes on apparent plant community trend; and target and actual utilization levels. Monitoring data shall be used to make adjustments to grazing management as needed.**

## OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

**OPERATION:** The manager will apply Prescribed Grazing on a continuing basis, making adjustments as needed to insure that the concept and objectives of its application are met.

**MAINTENANCE:** The Prescribed Grazing Strategy will specify when evaluations of the current feed and forage supply should be made. If an imbalance is determined the prescription should be adjusted accordingly.

All structural practices that are needed to facilitate adequate grazing distribution as planned by this practice standard will be maintained in good working order.

## REFERENCES

Best Management Practices for Grazing—Montana, DNRC. 1999.

Caring for the Green Zone, Adams and Fitch, Pub. No. I-581. August 1995.

Effective Cattle Management in Riparian Zones, Montana BLM Riparian Technical Bulletin No. 3. 1997.

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Monitoring for Success Notebook, DNRC. 1998.

Montana Interagency Plant Materials Handbook, Chapter 4, Montana State University Extension Service, EB 69. April 1993.

Photo Point Monitoring Handbook, Frederick C. Hall, USFS, Pacific Northwest Region, Portland, Oregon. 2000.

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Riparian Area Management, Grazing Management for Riparian-Wetland Areas, TR 1737-14. 1997.

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Species Selection, Seeding Techniques, and Management of Irrigated Pastures in Montana and Wyoming, Montana State University Extension Service, EB 99. April 1991.

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Tips On Land and Water Management For Small Ranches In Montana, DNRC. 1997.

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NO INFORMATION